The Portrayal of the Renaissance Spirit in the Vachana Literature of 12thCentury Select Women Vachankara : A Study

A Synopsis submitted to

Swami RamanandTeerthMarathwada University,

Nanded

For the research work leading to the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In English

Under the Faculty of Humanities

Researcher

ASHA PADMAKARRAO BAMANE

M.A., B.Ed.

Research Supervisor

DR. MIRZA MAQSOOD BAIG

Associate Professor, Post Graduate Dept. of English and Research Centre

People's College, Nanded- 431602

January, 2024

The Portrayal of the Renaissance Spirit in the Vachana Literature of 12th Century Select Women Vachankara : A Study

1.Introduction:

In the history of India, specially Karnataka, the 12th century was marked by cultural transition. This period witnessed a great socio- spiritual revolution headed by Mahatma Basweshwar and his contemporaries established 'AnubhavMantap' which said to be the first spiritual parliament in the world. Basweshwara's teachings mobilised a powerful grass root spiritual movement called the Sharana Movement. This multidimensional revolution was a protest against the social environment. It is one of the most unique events in the religious history of perhaps any country in the world. It was a revolution that sought to uproot blind beliefs and meaningless dogmas and rituals. This was a revolution involving religious, economic, social and literary reforms aimed to establish a casteless and classless society based on spiritual and humanistic values. This revolution focused on the well-being of the downtrodden as well as gender equality. This revolution originated under the charismatic, inspiring and dynamic leadership of Basweshwar, popularly called Basavanna who preached a practical form of spirituality which was characterised by personal devotion. Basavanna's greatest desire was the welfare of the common man, so he was the man of the masses. He was not only a philosopher and saint but a social reformer and a great economist also.

1.1 Vachana Literature:

In this social reformatory movement many men and women got involved. They expressed their revolutionary thoughts in a particular literary form, which is called 'Vachana'. Vachanas are poems in lucid language, simple words, four to five line verses, but with great depth of philosophical meaning. 'Vachana' means promise, a promise which is done with the purity and equality not only in thought process but also in practices, especially for the welfare of mankind. These Vachanas propounded profound philosophical and reformist ideas. They advocated social justice and equality. It means they were for the abolition of caste system and class system, assertion of equality against priesthood and dogmatism. AnubhavMantap was the medium of spreading Vachanas to the common mass.

1.2 A Women Liberation Movement :

There are many Vachankaras (Composers of Vachans) like Basvanna, Allmprabhu, AkkaMahadevi, Siddharameshwara, JadaraDasimaihah. There are 125 male Vachankaras and 33 female vachankaras. Almost all saints who took lead in the revolution were poets who poured out their souls in Vachanas. The advent of as many as 33 women saints, who were also Vachana writers at one and the same time were an unprecedented phenomenon. It shows the important contribution of women at that time when society was under rigid traditional rituals, riots based on religion, and specially gender discrimination. It is clear that there was a good scope to women to express themselves through these Vachanas, means the main object was not only to educate and encourage women but to make them aware of their self esteem and to develop skill and ability to present their inner powerful thoughts. In true sense it was the Women's Liberation Movement because before it, the condition of women was miserable, she had become a victim of double oppression, a victim of gender discrimination and a victim of social and religious oppression. Being deprived of freedom, she became the weakest limb of society dependent upon man for her survival when she lost her freedom, she lost her strength, due to which, she lost her voice too. Living as she did in such a suffocating atmosphere, she was as good as dead, a living and walking corpse, a worthless thing of no dignity and no identity and a non-entity.

Mahatma Basweshwar and his contemporaries were born at such time in the history of India when the Hindu society had got into a root of karma and rituals and women were made a victim of social, religious and spiritual injustice. They strove to build rather to rebuild the society on the solid structure of social justice. The social justice, which Sharanas (Vachan composers) dreamt of and strove to transform their dream into reality, was a casteless and classless society, in which men and women enjoyed equal opportunities in all walks of life. They also strove to free women from the shackles of the orthodox system in which men's dominance over women was unquestioned. Hitherto woman was confined to the four walls of her house. The Sharnas pulled down the walls of her prison and extended the scope of her freedom beyond the four walls of her house to social religious and spiritual world. She was made to realise her potential both physical and spiritual and to enjoy equal opportunities with men. So the principle of equality became the main pillars of the Vachana Movement. The lives of various women vachankaras and their vachanas are a proof of the fact that the spirit of equality pervaded the atmosphere that prevailed in the 12th century Karnataka and some part of Maharashtra.

All these women vachankaras brought into their Vachana poetry the heterogeneity of experiences, attitude and modes of communication. While AkkaMahadevi is distinguished by unsurpassed lyricism and mastery of imagery and idiom, the other women vachankaras employed a specific way of style, tones and rhetorical strategies. Like their contemporary male vachankaras

these women express their day-to-day professions philosophically through vachanas. KadiraRamavve describes her spinning wheels as the form of God, Lakamma, the wife of AydakkiMarayya, chides her husband sternly for collecting more rice than required, saying that greed is for king not for devotees. Vachankaras expressed through vachanas that all men and women are souls and souls have no gender discrimination to which bodies are subjected. Man had forgotten the invisible nature of soul and mistook physical differences between men and women.

If one develops breasts and plaits of hair,

They say it's a female.

If one grows moustache,

They say it's a male.

But the soul that moves about within them

Is neither female of male

Mark, O Ramnaatha!

(DevaraDasimayya, SVS Vol. 7, V. 853)

This is definitely an extraordinary level of equality expressed through Vachana Literature. The women poets share the egalitarian philosophy of the movement and protest against the Verna system and caste discrimination. Bontadevi asks whether there is a Brahmin space inside the village and an untouchable space outside the village, space is one and immutable. There are many women Vachankaras from the lower and oppressed castes of the 12th century society and they speak of the joy of transcending caste barriers.

The present research comprises a detail account of these thirty three (33) women vachankaras and throws light on the biographical details and explores the thematic perception in their vachanas.

2.Objectives of Study:

- to review the historical background of Vachana Literature in 12th century
- to understand Sharana Movement and Vachana Literature
- to throw light on the life background and literary works of Women Vachanakara
- to study the thematic perceptions of Vachanas of women vachankara
- to study the literary features of Vachanas of women vachankara

- to assess the relevance of vachanas of women vachankara at present time

3. Hypotheses:

1. Vachana Literature is based on the reformatory ideas in 12th century.
2. Women vachankaras contributed to the vachana literature in vachana movement.
3. Humanitarian themes are reflected through the vachanas of women vachankara.
4. Vachanas of women vachankara are having specific literary features.
5. Vachanas of women vachankara are relevant today for the upliftment of society.

4. Scope and Limitations:

1. Vachana literature has been widely written in 12^{th} century but in the present research only the vachanas which are written by women vachankara will be selected.
2. The original vachanas were composed and written in Kannada language. The only English translation of vachanas will be referred for the research study.
3. There are1102 vachanas available of women vachankara; out of them selected vachanas will be studied.
4. There are many more facet of themes but only humanitarian facet of themes will be studied.
5. The present research will be useful to an individual as well as all sections of society.

5. Research Methodology:

The proposed study intends to study the thematic perception of vachanas of women vachankara. The research will be analytical and interpretative; hence it claims descriptive, analytical and interpretative research methodology. Extensive reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources will be required for the investigation of the selected perspectives. The researcher will use library methodology as per the requirement of information about the topic.

6. Data Collection:

The data required for the present research work will be collected from both primary and secondary sources.

1) Primary Sources:

Primary data source will be the authentic 'Vachanas', translated in English, by BasavaSamithi, Bangalore.

2) Secondary Sources:

As secondary source, the researcher will consult reference books, articles in journals and magazines. For this the researcher will consult various university libraries in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

6. Review of Literature:

Vachana literature is one of the most important literary genres in Karnataka. Many type of books are published and research work has been done on vachana literature. Basweshwar, Alamprabhu, Chenna–Basweshwar, Siddhrameshwara and Akkamadevi are the five pillars of vachana literature. The focus is given on MahtmaBasweshwar as he is considered the pioneer of this movement. Many research works have been done on Basweshwara, It is noticed that very less research work has been done on women Vachankaras.

There are Marathi and English books available on women Vachankara. The vachanaliterature will be studied while doing the present research work.

8. Significance of Research Study:

Vachan Literature is one of those cultural heritages of India, which was behind the curtain till 20th century. There are many reasons, like it was bound to local Kannada language; it became the victim of contemporary so called religious authority which was against the reformation of society as considering the reformation to the path of degradation without thinking rationally. The rise of Mahatma Basweshwar and other contemporary vachankaras spread their rational ideology through vachanas composed by them. Thirty three (33) women vachankaras also play a remarkable leading role of women in the field of composing vachanas in 12^{th} century. This is definitely a revolutionary initiative in the world history ever known. These women vachankaras clear that there is no difference between men and women at least so in the realm of mystic experience, so the contribution of these women vachankaras is outstanding. These women vachankaras were Akkamahadevi and Muktayakka, who followed the classical path of world renunciation. Many married women like Nilambike (wife of Basweshwar),Mahadeviyamma (wife of MoligeMarayya) participated in the movement along with their normal family life. Many low caste women such as Remavve (the spinner), Lakamma (the rice gleaner), Remamma (the mirror seller), Kamamma (the rope maker), Satyakka (the sweeper), and Sankavve (the sex worker) have made their contribution to these Vachana Movement, composed vachanas and participated in spiritual discourses.

The attempt of this research work is to throw light on the vachanas of these women vachankaras, their perception and perspective through vachanas, the desired ideal through vachanas which was

conjugal love, companionship and devotion to Kayaka and the community. From more than 1000 vachanas composed by 33 women vachankaras, collected by late M. M. Kalburgi, it appears that the women in the Vachana Movement were not only confined to the domestic world, but they were active participants in the radically new idealism, a new vision for the society based on the pure social justice, human rights and, of course, humanism.

9. Tentative Chapter Scheme:

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter will focus on introducing the historical and social background of 12th century in which vachana literature emerged and developed. The origin of Sharana Movement, and its importance according to the vachana literature its background vastness and scope will be explained. Important Vachankaras and their contribution for the enrichment of this cultural trend will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter also takes into account the study of previous researchers done on and around this topic. It will give comprehensive idea of the framework of Vachana Literature.

Chapter II: Biographical Sketch and Literary Work of Women Vachankara

This chapter will throw light on the biographical details of women vachankaras, which is inspiration for their composition. There are thirty three (33) women vachankaras, so outline of their life span and their literary contribution will be explained in this chapter. From these vachankaraAkkaMahadevi is in the leading role she has composed 434 vachanas, whereas as Akkamma has composed 154 vachanas. Among these thirty three (33) Vachankaras, though some women have composed 1 or 2 vachanas but it is also an important part of literary heritage, that's why it is also taken into consideration in this chapter.

Chapter III: Thematic Perceptions and Analysis of Vachanas of Women Vachankara.

This chapter deals with the thematic perception. In the vachanas of these women Vachankara, various humanitarian themes are explained. These vachanas are strong assertion of feminism; a strong feministic perspective can be seen through their expressions. Hues of humanism can be seen through the social justice, equal rights, eradication of caste and class for the sake of welfare of mankind. Socialism one may find through the Kayaka and Dasoha philosophy where work is worship principle in the form of kayaka and social or economical equality can be seen through Dasoha which is donation of the excess wealth or goods. Reformatory ideas not only in words but was the practical way of living of these vachankaras. Spiritualism and mysticism was the top most facets of these vachanas. The pure form the

universal reality is praised through vachanas and belief in higher authority and devotion towords it, helps the mass to live their life in noblest way.

Chapter IV: Literary Features of Vachanas of Women Vachankara

This chapter will explore the literary form of this unique genre vachanas. Vachanas are simple and lucid; four to five lines poems with testimony to the depth of metaphysical experiences. Vachana literature possesses all those poetic qualities, which modern critics look for in a poetic work. The language of vachana poetry attains richness and intensity through simile, metaphor and other poetic devices. Their form is also so appealing to the common people. In this chapter various literary features of these vachanas will be explained.

Chapter V: Relevance and Impact of Vachana Literature at Present

This chapter will deal with the relevance and impact of vachana literature by women vachankara in the chaotic situation of today's world. Vachanas are philosophical poems which are based on the ideal thinking and stand as a torch light for the society which was struggling in the darkness of rituals and dogmatism. This chapter will explain the values which are relevant and impactful not only for today but for the future generations to come.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The conclusions will be drawn based on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. Vachanas in Vachana literature which are eternal from it's origin to future and even relevent origin to solve the intricate problem of humanity in any era of world history.

10. References:

A) Primary source :

Kalburgi, M. M., NagbhushanSwamy, O. L. *Vachana*(English translation) by Basaw Samithi, Bengaluru-1,2012.

B) Secondary sources:

1) Yaravintelimath, C.R. *vachanas of women saints* :Banglore: BasavaSamithi, 2006.
2) Hiremath, U. S. *Women saints of Karnataka in search of truth*Banglore: BasavaSamiti, 2013.
3) Virupakshappa,*Sharanas Divine Revolution*, Banglore: BasavaSamiti, 2001.
4) Waghmare N.A.*Historical Importance of Vachansahitya* , Dharwad:Karnataka Historical Research Society (R) , 2017.
5) Patil, N.S. *Mahadeviyakks :The Mystic poet*Banglore: BasavaSamiti, 2014.

6) Deshpande, H.V. *Research in Literature and language Philosophy, Areas and Methodology*, Chennai: Notion press, India, 2018.
7) Desai, P. B.*Basvesvara and His Times*, Dr. M. M. KalburgiAdhyayanaSamsthe, Gadag, April, 2018.
8) Naukar, L.D. *Basava and Human Rights*,BasavaSamithi, Bangalore. 2007.

Researcher.

Asha P Bamane

Research Supervisor

Dr. Mirza Maqsood. Baig